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## EDITORIAL

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The suggestion of the American Speech Committee that the first week of November be celebrated throughout the nation as "Better Speech Week" is a happy one. Such celebrations already held in several towns and in one entire state have demonstrated both the values which may be realized and the best means to be employed. Elsewhere in this issue of the *Journal* will be found articles summing up the chief features that have proved successful and setting forth some of the pitfalls to be shunned. There need be no serious errors either of aim or of procedure.

The need is patent. Thousands of our recruits for the army were found to be illiterate or unable to speak English. Thousands more were unable to qualify as officers because of sheer inability to give commands so as to be heard and understood. Behind all lies the necessity for that social solidarity which conscious possession of a common tongue insures.

While we are awake is the time to act. English teachers, because of their special training and professional interests, may well be expected to be the first to act. They should, however, not fail to enlist the co-operation of all. Particularly should they not omit to give to children and young people the chance to plan and execute. Let us make Speech Week in every good sense of the term a successful project.

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### IS THIS A PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENT?

Some time ago a distinguished educational writer said in substance (a) that English has had an unexampled opportunity for a very long time; (b) that it has wholly failed to make good; (c) that if its failure continues, as seems likely, it will forfeit its present status and be again relegated to the background. This statement, since repeated by others, is entitled to attention.

On examination it seems to be inaccurate in at least three particulars: (a) English has had, not an unexampled "opportunity," but an unexampled recognition as to its importance (none at all as

to its difficulties), and an unexampled burden of responsibility without means (and therefore without opportunity) of meeting it. (b) It has not failed to make good when handled by workers of trained initiative with (and sometimes without) proper facilities; others than these, required or requested to perform impossibilities, have responded willingly and have failed heroically. (c) Though English cannot lose an opportunity that never has existed, it might conceivably lose its present status: but with the increasing post-war demands on the mother-tongue and for the spiritual and social influences which English chiefly or only can provide, this seems unlikely; and if it should occur, neither the loss nor the responsibility for it would belong primarily to the English-teaching profession.

Rather would that responsibility rest upon such accepted authorities as carelessly disseminate error and so confirm conditions which they might easily ascertain, and which their influence should aid to remedy. When the weight of their reputation is added to the forces which hinder educational progress it is at first discouraging; but in the end such misdirection should stimulate those who know the truth to utter it for themselves as they have or may create opportunity. Perhaps this is the crucial moment for such an effort, if it is ever to be made—that the English situation may be intelligently and fairly handled in the present far-reaching plans for educational reconstruction.

The ends of such an effort might be as follows:

1. To extend by some means to the shifting and transitory and untrained and accidental workers in English, perhaps three-fourths of the total number, the knowledge that English teaching is a profession with its own independent body of established data and principles; and in particular to show the facts, all fully available, as to when English teaching “makes good” and when it does not, and why in each case.

2. To make known to other teachers, to professional “educators,” including executives, administrators, and professors of education, and to the general public, that such knowledge exists, that it is available, and that trained teachers properly equipped can and do apply it successfully.

3. To extend the organized interest and activity and responsibility of English from the content and method of its traditional or prescribed field to all other parts of the educational structure to which it is directly related, or in which it is fundamental. Perhaps 90 per cent of the duty of a complete and "democratic" education is untouched by the autocratic pre-war tradition; and since English is oftenest called on to meet new duties when discovered, it is entitled at least to equal initiative and voice in pointing them out.

Such things are to be accomplished, if at all, only by commonplace and laborious means: by talking to others, everybody, in season and out of season; by coaxing the uninformed to subscribe, to join, to attend, to co-operate; by getting one's self and others on programs, English and general, wherever enlightenment is most needed; by writing articles, for popular magazines because they offer pay and are read by the public, for professional journals, general first and then English, and for the newspapers, especially those in one's own town. All trained English teachers can speak and write with real authority. They can all find space somewhere—sometimes with a check to follow; and they are all accustomed to perform tasks that others ignore, neglect, or refuse.

When all other means fail, one infallible resource is left: to tell our own pupils the things about education and about English education that everybody should know. They will hear and understand; presently they themselves will be the public and in control of the purse; and when, in another epoch than ours, they insist upon having what is needed, they will be able to get it.

How many of the five thousand readers of the *English Journal* would like to see initiated such a broad, aggressive, propagandist campaign, by council, journal, committees, individuals, and every other possible agency named and unnamed, from Washington to Washington, and from the present psychological moment to kingdom come? Would you mind dropping a line to that effect?

E. M. H.